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UNCLAS KUWAIT 003311

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SUBJECT: TRIALS POSTPONED; FAILAKA SUSPECTS RELEASED ON BAIL

REF: KUWAIT 4496 (2002) AND PREVIOUS

1. On July 19, Kuwait's Criminal Court announced the postponement to September 6 of the trial of twelve Kuwaiti students charged with involvement in the October, 2002 shooting incident which led to the death of U.S. Marine LCPL Antonio Sledd, on Failaka Island. The Court released two of the suspects, Sulaiman Jamal and Mohammed Assad, on KD 5,000 bail (approximately USD \$ 15,000) each, on the grounds that neither had any prior criminal record. Both are banned from traveling outside the State of Kuwait.

2. All of the suspects, who were filmed confessing to their involvement in the incident during interrogations by Kuwaiti Security Services (KSS), now claim these confessions were made under duress.

3. In another adjournment the same day, the Court announced that the trial of Hakem al-Mutairi, who had been charged with slander against KSS, would be postponed until October 27. Mutairi is Secretary General of the Salafist Movement, otherwise known as the Scientific Salafis.

4. Comment: Post ascribes the delays solely to the summer holidays, during which many Kuwaitis are outside the country, rather than any change in GOK policy. We will continue to monitor developments in these cases.

JONES